

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-07 FEA-01 ACDA-07 CIAE-00
INR-07 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-05
DODE-00 SS-15 SP-02 PM-05 /090 W
-----102256 182109Z /66

R 181606Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0911
ALL EC CAPITALS
INFO ERDA GERMANTOWN
ERDA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY VIENNA

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USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, TECH, EEC
SUBJ: EC COMMISSION ON NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING

1. THE EC COMMISSION HAS SENT TO THE COUNCIL ITS
POSITION ON NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING. NOT SURPRISINGLY,
IT COMES OUT STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF REPROCESSING, DEFENDING
THE NEED FOR PLUTONIUM BOTH FOR RECYLING IN LIGHT-
WATER REACTORS AND AS FEED FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF FAST
BREEDER REACTORS. MORE NEWSWORTHY IS THE FACT THAT IT
PROPOSES REGIONALIZATION AS JOINT VENTURES UNDER
EURATOM CONTROL OF ALL EC REPROCESSING PLANTS.

2. ACCORDING TO THE COMMISSION, BY THE YEAR 2000 THE
COMMUNITY WILL ACCOUNT FOR ONE THIRD OF TOTAL WORLD
DEMAND FOR NUCLEAR FUEL. AT PRESENT, IT DEPENDS ON
IMPORTS FOR 80 PERCENT OF ITS URANIUM SUPPLIES.
RECYCLING OF PLUTONIUM (AND REPROCESSED URANIUM) IN
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LIGHT-WATER REACTORS WOULD REDUCE THE EC'S NATURAL
URANIUM REQUIREMENTS BY 20 PERCENT A YEAR FROM 1985 TO
1990 AND REDUCE URANIUM ENRICHMENT NEEDS BY 15 PERCENT
OVER THE SAME PERIOD. IN ADDITION, THE COMMISSION
ARGUES THAT REPROCESSING WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO
INDEPENDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SUPPLY ONCE THE FAST BREEDER
REACTORS ARE OPERATIONAL. IT ALSO ARGUES THAT

REPROCESSING, AND SUBSEQUENT BURNING OF PLUTONIUM IN REACTORS, SIMPLIFIES GREATLY THE LONG-TERM PROBLEMS OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE STORAGE.

3. THE COMMISSION PROPOSES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE, COMPOSED OF A MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION AND THREE OTHER MEMBERS CHOSEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, TO PREPARE A REPORT TO THE COUNCIL ON MEANS FOR FINANCING AND PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT REPROCESSING PLANTS. THIS COMMITTEE IS TO REPORT ITS FINDINGS TO THE COUNCIL BY THE END OF 1978 (COMMENT: WE NOTE CONSISTENCY WITH INFCEP SCHEDULE.) THE COMMISSION ALSO PROPOSES A FOUR-PART STRATEGY; JOINT VENTURES BETWEEN OPERATORS OF REPROCESSING PLANTS AND NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS; THE PROVISION OF REPROCESSING SERVICES TO MEMBER COUNTRIES AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE PRICE; FINANCIAL AID; AND OFFERING PARTICIPATION IN THE JOINT VENTURES TO THIRD COUNTRIES (NOTABLY NON-EC EUROPEAN COUNTRIES).

4. THE COMMISSION FAVORS REGIONALIZATION OF EC REPROCESSING FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

(A) THE CONCENTRATION OF REPROCESSING FACILITIES SIMPLIFIES SAFEGUARDS AND PHYSICAL SECURITY;

(B) FEWER FACILITIES MIGHT RESULT COMPARED TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EACH COUNTRY GOING THEIR OWN WAY;

(C) INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF THESE FACILITIES (THROUGH EURATOM AND IAEA) AIDS NON-PROLIFERATION OBJECTIVES.

5. THE COMMISSION REPORTED THAT SIMILAR POLICY PAPERS ON FAST BREEDERS AND STORAGE OF RADIOACTIVE WASTES WILL BE ISSUED IN THE COMING WEEKS.

6. MISSION COMMENT: IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW SUCCESSFUL THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL FOR JOINT ENTERPRISE REPROCESSING FACILITIES WILL BE. ONE COMMISSION OFFICIAL HAS ADMITTED TO US THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE RETICENCE ON THE PART OF EXISTING ENTERPRISES AND SOME MEMBER COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, HE SAID, THEY ARE ALL AWARE OF THE GENERAL MOVEMENT TOWARD INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SENSITIVE NUCLEAR FACILITIES AND MAY BE CONVINCED THAT A EUROPEAN CONTROL WOULD BE MORE PALATABLE THAN SOME OTHER INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE THAT MAY EVOLVE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE SETTING UP OF THE SPECIAL STUDY COMMITTEE HAS A FIGHTING CHANCE OF SUCCESS, BUT THAT

NOT MUCH MORE WILL HAPPEN UNTIL REPORT IS SUBMITTED
AT END OF 1978.HINTON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, NUCLEAR FUELS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BRUSSE08235
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770256-0400
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS USEEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770749/aaaabpqj.tel
Line Count: 118
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 14eb356a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1834215
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EC COMMISSION ON NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING
TAGS: ENRG, TECH, EEC
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/14eb356a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009